
Keyboard Orientation



Introducing the Keyboard

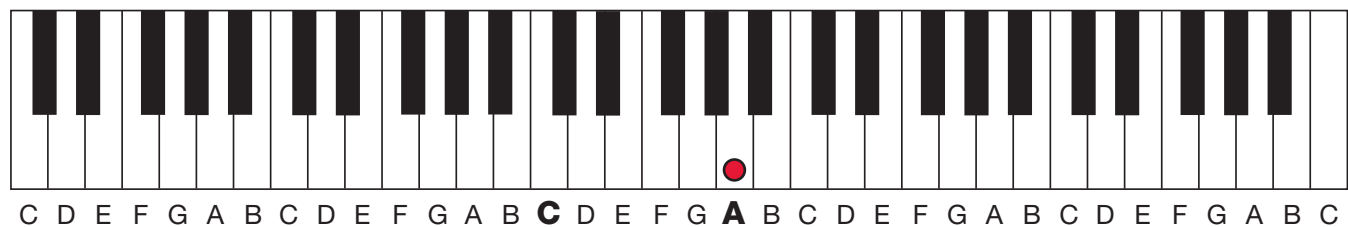
To play the keyboard it is necessary to understand the names of the notes, both on the keyboard and on the musical **stave**.

The first letter of the musical alphabet is **A** and this is where we are going to begin our study of the keyboard.

Look at our picture of a modern keyboard below. It is the same as a piano and consists of both black and white **keys**. For the purpose of our first exercise you will see that we have indicated where you will find the note of **A**. We will introduce more notes as we progress through the lesson and course.

For the moment we have placed the note name under the white notes only in *Figure 1* below. The **A** we are going to play is slightly emboldened and has a red dot above it on the keyboard.

Figure 1: The Modern Keyboard



Middle C is emboldened as a reference in Figure 1

Lesson Objectives

- To familiarise ourselves with the layout of the keyboard and be able to play and identify a number of notes on the keyboard.
- Introduce the musical **stave** and begin to be able to recognise different notes and their positions on the stave.
- Introduce the concept of **rhythm** using **whole notes**, **half notes** and **quarter notes**.
- Introduce and be able to play simple **chords** of A and G known as **triads**.
- Introduce **common time**.

Introducing the Musical Stave

We need to be able to understand notes both on the keyboard and on the musical stave as mentioned above. Have a look at our second figure below and you will see the stave upon which music is written. Each space and line represents a note and you can see that we have written an **A** note on the stave in the second space up from the bottom, in what is called the **treble clef**. We will explain the two clefs later.



Figure 2: The musical stave introducing the note of A

Introducing and understanding Whole Notes

We are about to play our first exercise, but before we can do this we need to have some understanding of counting **rhythm**.

Music is ordered into **bars**. The most common bar is divided into 4 **beats** and because it is the most common it is called **common time**.

In a bar of common time there are 4 beats. In our first exercise below there is only one note which lasts for 4 beats and consequently this note is called a **whole note** as it fills the whole of a four beat bar.

Playing A (using Whole Notes)



Playing an A

Our first exercise requires you to play the note of **A**, using the thumb of your **right hand**, holding the note for the whole bar, 4 beats.

Now, throughout the course we have supportive multimedia files for you to use to help you play the exercises and to enable you to check that what you are doing is correct.

Firstly, click the video icon and watch the video of this exercise being played. Then when you are happy, click the play along icon with the Gigajam G and play along with the Keyboard Xtractor. This will enable you to play your exercise around and around until you are comfortable with your performance. Playing with the Xtractor files gives you a feeling of playing with other musicians. You can speed up and slow down the Xtractor and you can also change the mix of the band to suit you.

Remember to **count** the four beats in the bar, so that you play the **A** in the right place each time.

NOTE Each exercise has 4 clicks before it begins.

Exercise 1: Playing A using Whole Notes

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Introducing Rhythm – Note Length

Our study of rhythm in these early lessons is represented by different notes of different lengths. Our first note, a whole note, is worth the whole of a bar of common time, (4 beats). If we divide the bar into half we can play two notes, each worth 2 beats.

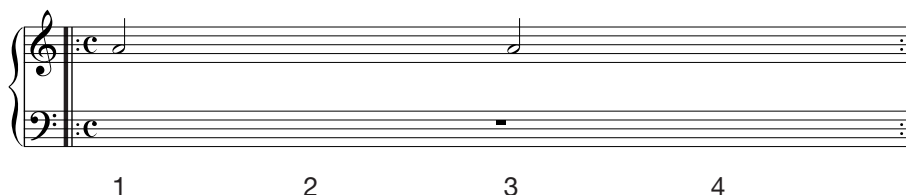
These notes are accordingly called **half notes**, as they are worth half of a bar of common time.

Playing A (using Half Notes)

In our second exercise we will play **A** using half notes. Look at the exercise below and using the supportive multimedia files practise playing half notes. Make sure that you count the four beats in the bar playing the half notes on beats 1 and 3.

Exercise 2: Playing A using Half Notes

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The image shows a musical exercise on a grand staff. The treble clef staff contains a whole note 'A' (F4) on the second line. The bass clef staff contains a whole rest on the first line (C3). The time signature is common time (C). The bar is divided into four beats, with the first and third beats marked with '1' and '3' respectively.

Introducing simple Chords – Triads

The keyboard player is often required to play more than one note at a time and quite often several notes. A **triad** is the name given to when three notes are played together. Playing more than one note at the same time is called a **chord**.

We are now going to play the chord of **A** using a triad. To do this though, we need to use the black notes on the keyboard, so let's have a quick look at the keyboard again.

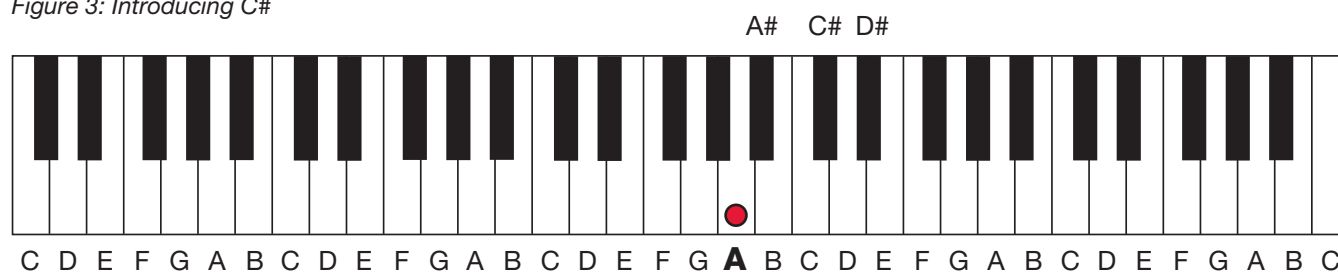
Introducing the Black Notes on the Keyboard

The black notes represent what are called **flats** and **sharps**. The symbol for a flat is **b** and the symbol for a sharp is **#**. We will go into more detail as we progress through the course but for now, look at our keyboard below.

You will see that immediately on the right of our **A**, is a black note and we call this **A#** (sharp). In sound terms it is slightly higher than the **A**, but lower than the next white note, the **B**. Play it and compare the pitches of **A**, **A#** and **B**.

For the same reason, we have highlighted **C#** and **D#**, the next two Black notes along.

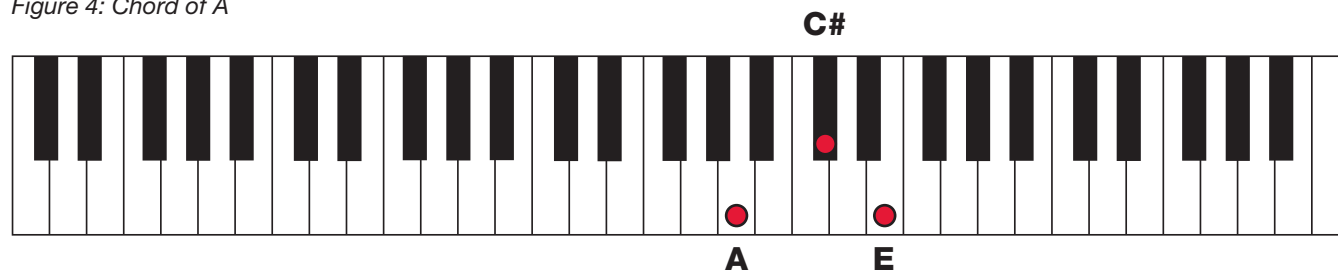
Figure 3: Introducing C#



Playing the Chord of A (using a Triad)

Now to play our first chord, we place the **thumb** of our **right hand** on the **A**. We then place our **middle finger** on the **C#** (black note) and our **little finger** on the **E** (white note), as shown in our figure below.

Figure 4: Chord of A



Make sure that when you play the chord that you play all three notes at exactly the same time, creating one sound from the three notes being played together.

To develop your ability to play this chord well, we are going to play this chord in our next exercise using whole notes. If you now look at the next exercise you will see that we have placed the notes of **A**, **C#** and **E** on our musical staff.

A is on the second to bottom space, **C** the next space up and **E** in the top space. We have denoted that the **C** is sharp (black note) with our sharp symbol (**#**) next to it.

To help your reading of notes it is worthwhile taking a few moments to familiarise yourself with the notes and where they are found on the staff.

Let's now play *Exercise 3*. As always, use the multimedia files to help you. When you play, go around the exercise until you are comfortable, counting clearly so that you know when to play.



Playing the Chord of A

Exercise 3: Playing an Chord of A

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1 2 3 4

Playing the Chord of A (using Half Notes)

Now that we have played the Chord of **A** using whole notes, let's now try playing half notes, helping us develop our rhythm and counting skills.

Exercise 4: Playing the Chord of A using Half Notes

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1 2 3 4

Playing the notes of A, C# and E individually

We should for the sake of good order play **C#** and **E** separately so that we are as familiar with their sound as we are with **A**.

Read and play the next exercise. It is asking you to play a bar of **A**, a bar of **C#** and a bar of **E**. Use the multimedia files, as always, to help you.

Exercise 5: Playing A, C# and E individually

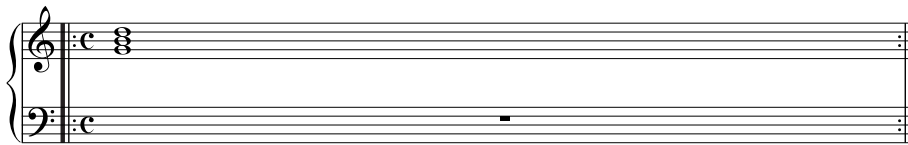
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1 2 3

Recognising more notes on the staff

So far we have played notes that are written in the spaces on the staff. What happens when we play notes on the lines? Look at our example below.

Figure 5: Chord of G

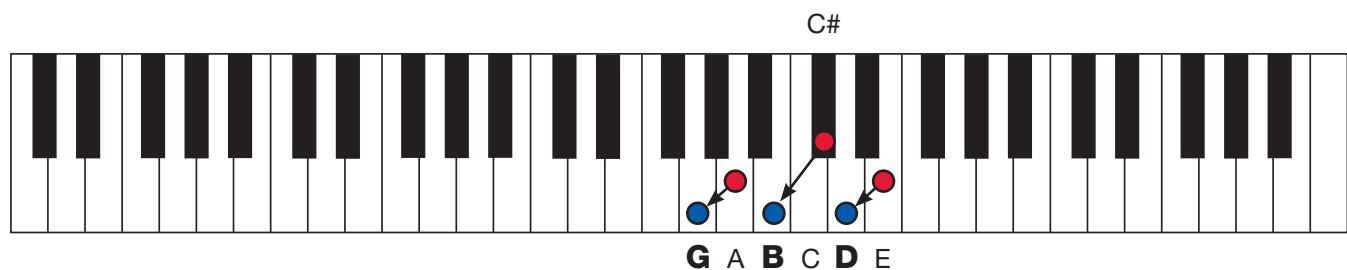


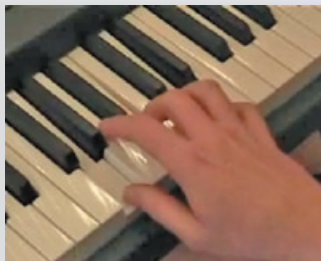
In *Figure 5* we have basically dropped each note from our Chord of **A** down from the spaces the notes were in to the lines below. Now we have different notes, we will get a different sound. Let's have a look at our next figure to see what notes we now have.

So, we have dropped down a note on each and we are only playing white notes as there isn't a # symbol.

- **A** has dropped to **G**.
- **C#** has dropped to **B** and,
- **E** has dropped to **D**

Figure 6: Chord of G





Playing the Chord of G

Playing the Chord of G (using a Triad)

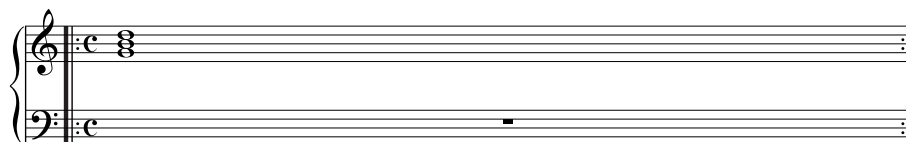
We have now identified that our three new notes are **G**, **B** and **D**. Because the first note is **G**, it is called a **G triad**, or the **chord of G**.

It is worth noting that the **G** is not only below the **A**, both on the keyboard and the musical staff, but also in sound.

Let's now play our **G** chord practising with the media files as usual.

Exercise 6: Playing the Chord of G

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Changing Chords (using A and G)

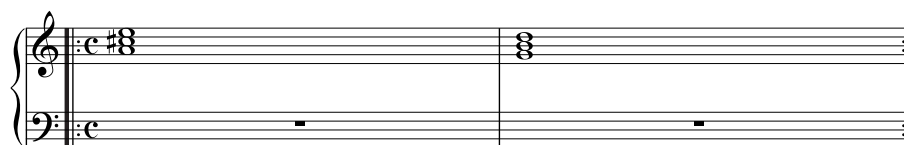
In music you will be required to play many chords in songs and the ability to change between different chords is an essential skill.

For the moment we have the chords of **A** and **G** and our next exercise will help you develop your skill in moving between them.

Look at the music for *Exercise 7* and using the supportive multimedia files play along.

Exercise 7: Changing Chords (using A and G)

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Introducing Quarter Notes

Thus far we have divided the bar using whole notes worth 4 beats and two half notes worth 2 beats each.

We can divide the bar further still and logically it makes sense to divide the bar into **quarter notes**, which are worth 1 beat each.

Look at *Figure 7* below. This has four quarter notes in a bar. Which note are they being played on?

Figure 7: Quarter Notes



Now we know what quarter notes look like we can try and use them in our playing by using our **A** and **G** triads.

Look at our next exercise below which consists of two bars of quarter notes. Use the multimedia files to help you play the exercise well.

Exercise 8: Playing Quarter Notes using Chords of A and G

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The answer to the question posed above Figure 7 is 'A'.

Study One

Finally for lesson one, we are now going to join together all of the new things we have learned in the lesson and play as one exercise.

Have a good close look at the music below and as always use the supportive multimedia files to play along with.

Exercise 9: Study One

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The musical score for Exercise 9: Study One is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 6 through 11. The music is written for piano in C major and 4/4 time. The right hand plays chords in the treble clef, while the left hand plays whole notes in the bass clef. The chords in the right hand are: G4-B4-D5 (measures 1-2), A4-C5-E5 (measures 3-4), B4-D5-F5 (measures 5-6), C5-E5-G5 (measures 7-8), D5-F5-A5 (measures 9-10), and E5-G5-B5 (measures 11-12). The left hand plays whole notes: G2 (measures 1-2), A2 (measures 3-4), B2 (measures 5-6), C3 (measures 7-8), D3 (measures 9-10), and E3 (measures 11-12). The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Practise

This lesson has taught you a number of things:

- How to play a number of different notes as chords/triads.
- Where they are found on the keyboard.
- Where they are found on a musical stave.
- How to play our first two chords of A and G.

Furthermore, you now know that:

- A common bar of music is made up of 4 beats.
- We have different notes that last different amounts of beats.
- Different notes of differing values enables us to create rhythm.

Your job now is to practise the exercises in the lesson, developing your skill in playing the keyboard. Use the KeyboardXtractor to play along with, remembering that you can slow the difficult exercises down if required and speed the one's up that you are becoming more comfortable with.

You can also record your performance into the KeyboardXtractor and compare against the exercise to see how you are getting on.